(b) if so, the number of refugees who have so far come down to India and where they have been settled; and

(c) the steps taken by Government to help resolve the ethnic issues with respect to Sri Lanka?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) and (b) Between April 2000, when the LTTE took control of the Elephant Pass at the entry to the Jaffna peninsula, and early July 2000, 743 refugees have entered India from Sri Lanka, according to available figures. Most of the refugees have been accommodated in camps in Tamil Nadu.

(c) The Government of India has consistently adhered to a policy involving a three-fold commitment:

(a) to the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka;

(b) to the restoration of lasting peace in Sri Lanka;

(c) to a peaceful, political process being the only means of achieving a lasting peace, through a negotiated settlement which would meet the aspirations of all communities.

India's policy was conveyed to the Sri Lankan Government and other political parties during the visit of the minister of External Affairs to Colombo on June 11-12-2000, India could play a helpful role only if all sides ask it to do so.

Indo-China bilateral relations

540. SHRI ANANTA SETHI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are taking steps to improve Indo-China bilateral relations;

(b) whether Indo-China high level talks were held for the purpose;

(c) if so, the various issued discussed there;

(d) the steps taken to resolve the Indo-China bilateral problems; and

(e) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) Yes Sir,

(b) to (e) The visit of External Affairs Minister Shri Jaswant Singh to China in June 1999 led to restoration of and normalisation in bilateral relations. The two sides reached important conclusions on furthering the CBM process,, initiating a security dialogue, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations and on further enhancing our cultural, economic and functional co-operation. In February 2000, the Minister of Commerce & Industry visited China for the 6th meeting of the Joint Economic Group. The two sides agreed to boost economic relations. In July 2000, the Minister of Information Technology visited China. During the visit, an MOU on co-operation in the field of information technology was signed.

The President paid a State-visit to China on May 28-June 3, 2000 against the backdrop of the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations. The two sides agreed to further enhance bilateral co-operation in diverse fields and to promote greater people-to-people contacts.

From the Chinese side, Dai Bingguo, Minister in the International Department of the Central Committee of Communist Party of China visited India in March 2000. During the visit of the Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan on July 21-22, 2000, the two sides addressed issues of mutual concern. The two sides agreed to expedite the process of LAC clarifications.

Our relations are improving and developing in diverse fields, with exchanges, *inter alia,* at the level of government, parliamentarians, scholars, entrepreneurs and other. Both sides have agreed to promote a friendly, cooperative, good-neighbourly and mutually beneficial relationship on the basis of Panchsheel.